



LINCOLN CHAFEE

U.S. SENATOR

RHODE ISLAND

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CONTACT: Stephen Hourahan
202-224-6167

CHAFEE CO-SPONSORS THREE BILLS TO FACILITATE KATRINA RELIEF

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Lincoln Chafee has joined his colleagues on the Committee on Environment & Public Works (EPW) in co-sponsoring three bills to facilitate hurricane relief efforts with regard to highway reconstruction, additional flexibility for federal building leases, and wastewater projects and testing.

“These three bills are critical to the reconstruction and recovery efforts because they will provide the resources and support needed for the rehabilitation of highways, and will give the General Services Administration the ability to relocate federal relief personnel in an expeditious manner. Most importantly, funding for critical improvements to damaged drinking water systems will be made available, ensuring a clean water supply to the residents of these three states,” Senator Chafee said.

The three bills are:

Ø **Federal Highway Administration’s Emergency Relief Program (S. 1714)**

This legislation waives the current \$100 million limit on the amount any state may be reimbursed by the Federal Highway Administration’s Emergency Relief program for damages resulting from any single disaster, and extends the period of time for which the federal share is 100%. The bill provides \$2.9 billion to the emergency relief program.

Ø **The Emergency Lease Requirements Act of 2005 (S. 1708)**

Current law provides authority to the Administrator of General Services to enter into leases of up to 180 days following a major disaster or other emergency. The General Services Administration (GSA) has found it difficult to secure such short term leases following previous disasters. The Emergency Lease Requirements Act of 2005, also co-sponsored by Senator Chafee, extends the maximum emergency lease term to five years.

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**Ø The Gulf Coast Water Infrastructure Emergency Assistance Act of 2005
(S. 1709)**

This legislation will provide the three states affected by Hurricane Katrina with the authority to forgive the principal on clean water loans. Currently states are only able to fund drinking water projects that appear on their annual intended use plan. The legislation will waive that requirement to ensure drinking water systems affected by Katrina are immediately eligible for state funds. Finally, many homeowners may have difficulty testing their wells given the number of potential contaminants in the flood waters. With the provisions in this bill, EPA can conduct testing at their request.